

MRS. BELMONT TO OPEN FIRST SUFFRAGE HOTEL

That Is Her Latest Enterprise Designed to Advance the Cause of Votes for Women—It Will Be One of the Many Activities of Political Equality Association's Clubhouse—Men Will Be Admitted

WHAT will Mrs. Oliver Hazard Perry Belmont do next? She has already been active in farming, club work, a number of unusual philanthropies, entertaining on a large scale and all sorts of endeavors in behalf of woman suffrage, from waiting on table to marching and public speaking and the expenditure of a great deal of money for the good of the cause, and now just in the last week it has been announced that she is to run a miniature hotel. The announcement has aroused as much interest as Mrs. Belmont's earlier experiments as a farmer.

Mrs. Belmont as a hotel keeper would be difficult to picture mentally had she not already surprised her friends and that big public which does not know her personally by one unexpected enterprise after another. Those who know her, therefore, are mostly content to say that if she has decided to keep a hotel it will undoubtedly be a good one. And if one asks why Mrs. Belmont has turned to hotel keeping the answer is the same as that which accounts for most of her undertakings in the last three years—her interest in woman suffrage. She is just as enthusiastic and energetic a suffragist as when she first announced her adherence to the cause about four years ago.

The hotel is a development of the suffrage club which Mrs. Belmont instituted and for which she bought and equipped a home last November. The two houses at 13 and 15 East Forty-first street were purchased by her and altered for suffrage purposes at a cost of \$320,000, as she herself has said. This sum did not include the furnishing. Now the house at 13 is to be a small hotel for suffragists. It will be opened in September. If you go past it now you can see workmen at the windows and a sound of hammering is audible most of the day.

Number 15, which is also undergoing reconstruction, is to be the home of the suffrage club that Mrs. Belmont founded—the Political Equality Association—and its neighbor to the west is to be devoted above the second floor to suites with baths where visiting suffragists can put up in comfort for a night or a week without the usual dependence on man. It will not be a Hotel Martha Washington though. A man who believes in votes for women will be able to get rooms there if any are vacant. The place is to be a hotel and a businesslike one primarily and there will not even be any restriction of guests to suffragists, but of course a bitter opponent of the enfranchisement of women would not be likely to apply for a suite while other hotels were open.

There are four stories and a basement to 13 East Forty-first street, but the whole of the first floor will be part of the suffrage club's lunch room. That's one of the things the carpenters are attending to just now. The layout of the two houses will be as follows:

The basement of 13 will be the hotel entrance and the three upper floors will be given over to suites of rooms, each with bath, bedroom and parlor. The basement of 15 will be the shop of the Political Equality Association, of which more will be told soon. The three upper floors of 15 will be the rooms of the club. The whole of the first floor of 13 and 15 will be one big room practically and will be the club's lunch room.

When Mrs. Belmont started the lunch room early last winter she had no idea

It is not unlikely that it will be Georgian. But she may want something distinctive, unidentified with any set of ideas or traditions. Mrs. Belmont has herself not said what she has in mind, but it is known that she will take up the problem and settle it quickly on her return from Newport.

At the same time and with her usual prompt decision she will appoint the staff of the little suffrage hotel and set the place in operation. Mrs. Belmont feels sure that the enterprise will be a success because of the number of suffragists from out of town who make a point of visiting her club's headquarters when in New York. Many of these have said that they wished the club had sleeping rooms where they could stay over night or longer if need be.

It was suggestions of this kind that first gave Mrs. Belmont the idea of the hotel. Now the only doubt seems to be as to whether the hotel part of the club will be inadequate to accommodate those who wish rooms from the very start.

The plan of the hotel was doubly welcome to Mrs. Belmont because a previous plan for utilizing the upper floors of 13 East Forty-first street had failed. When Mrs. Belmont first acquired the two houses there was much more room, apparently, than her club needed. But she had the future in mind. So while the Political Equality Association was housed in No. 15, Mrs. Belmont designed most of No. 13 for bachelor suites. They were not inexpensive suites either.

It was her hope that a limited number of men of means would be glad to engage such desirable rooms. But in this she was disappointed. Whether or not it was the vicinage of the club that kept comfortably off bachelors from taking rooms at No. 13 is difficult to say, but that was the only apparent reason. At any rate the rooms did not rent.

Mrs. Belmont was somewhat disappointed, and equally perplexed as to what to do with the house. Then her lunch club began to boom. She had wisely made the lunch club inexpensive. There were a counter and tables. Soon so many folks came around at midday to eat the table d'hôte dinner offered or to order the 15 cent à la carte luncheon or to ask eagerly for the day's soup, with beans and corned beef on the side, that the room became noisy and the serving girls simply weren't able to handle the orders. The noise reached Mrs. Belmont in her little office room and she came actively out. Not bothering with cap or apron to protect her costume she pointed to a plate of soup in transit, saying:

"Give it to me."

The waitress obeyed, and amid an awestruck silence Mrs. Belmont handed the plate of soup to the most hungry looking person at the lunch counter. She went right on waiting too, and soon there was no more noise, no shoving, no pushing, no crowding. At 1 o'clock Mrs. Belmont said she wasn't tired. It was perfectly easy, she added, if one went about it the right way. She did not spill anything while she was serving customers either.

The lunch club boomed mightily. There wasn't room enough and Mrs. Belmont soon saw a use for one floor of No. 13 as an enlargement of the lunch room. Then came suffrage dances at the clubhouse, and these became immensely popular too. Toward the end

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Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont.

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Afternoon tea was served from 4 to 6 o'clock.

The lunch room was opened to both sexes. It was really a transfer of the lunch room that had been operated by the suffragists in Thirty-fourth street, where Miss Donnelly, who was in charge, made many converts to the suffrage cause by her presence rather than by any deliberate argument. The men would converse with Miss Donnelly while lunching, and Miss Donnelly did not miss opportunities to advance the interests of suffrage.

The rule of the lunch room in East Forty-first street has always been first come first served. No tables were reserved for women. It was designed to demonstrate that perfect equality between the sexes which suffragists want in political affairs. Nor was the lunch room philanthropic. The fact that they could get better food there for less money than elsewhere was undoubtedly what made it a go from the start.

Up on the second floor of No. 15 was the beauty shop. This seemed surprising to many not versed in suffrage ways, but it was almost as big a hit as the luncheon. Its wares naturally appealed to women mostly. It was a shop de luxe. Installed as it is now in the basement of No. 15 it is still a shop de luxe.

There are big show windows and show cases. On shelves are rows and rows of jars of powder, paste and liquid aids to beauty. A young woman with abundant hair, perfect complexion and pearly teeth was engaged to sell remedies at rock bottom prices. She did. She did it so well that she couldn't dispose of the stuff as fast as visitors and members wanted to buy it. Mrs. Belmont sold suffrage shampoo mixtures, hair tonics, &c., one day for forty-five minutes to help out. There was such a crush that at the end of that time it had to be announced that no more preparations would be sold that day.

Mrs. Belmont also built herself a little private office on the third floor of No. 15. Then the upper floors of both houses were fitted up as bachelor apartments. The reconstruction now going on will put the clubhouse wholly in No. 15 except that the floor one flight up from the street in both houses will be given over to the lunch room. All the rest of No. 13 will be the world's first suffrage hotel.

Mrs. Belmont showed ingenuity and talent for organization in the work of building up her new suffrage club. Every Tuesday evening last winter she had Mme. Gardiner Bartlett conduct a singing class at which young women could learn to sing the hymns of the cause—and other things—and could also get the voice training to enable them to talk convincingly about the need of votes for women whether they stood on a soap box at a street corner or on the platform of a big auditorium.

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